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DISTRICT SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

If one of a caravan, in crossing the Arabian desert, should accidentally descry a fountain, at a distance, in the broad waste, and, stealing to it, unperceived by the rest of the company, should slake his own thirst with its sweet waters, and then leave the stream to flow uselessly away, and to be absorbed and lost in the barren sands, without calling upon his companions to come and cool their parched lips with a delicious draught,—with what sufficiently opprobrious epithet would men stigmatize the inhumanity of the deed? Let him, who, from the accident of birth or of circumstance, has tasted the satisfactions and the delights, and has experienced the utility, of knowledge, but does nothing to confer upon his fellow-beings the blessings which he has enjoyed, answer the question. Such a man drinks, daily, at the fountain of knowledge, in the desert of life, and then suffers its copious waters to flow wastefully away, without calling upon his fellow-travelers in the journey, to drink of a stream that is abundant for all.

It is said that we are an educated people; and there is a sense, in which this declaration is true. Such an assertion, however, supposes a comparison; and, of course, its correctness depends upon the condition of those, with whom the comparison is made. Compared with many, and even with most people on the earth, the result would be in our favor; but, compared with what we may be, and should be, our present inferiority is unspeakable. Take the rank and file of men, without any culling or selection, as you find them in society; take the whole population of husbands and fathers, that belong to a neighborhood or village; listen to their conversation, when some local occasion has brought them together, and you cannot but perceive, that, however much they may know, they might have known indefinitely more; however well they may converse, they might have been able to express themselves indefinitely better, if greater means of knowledge had been possessed and improved. How few men show, that their time and faculties have been employed upon the worthiest objects,—on those objects, which would have been most coveted, too, had their value been known.

Let a man listen to a party of young people, in the unspent vigor of their days, overflowing with hilarity and joyousness from an inborn spring, and see how much of their mental strength and alertness is squandered upon frivolous or insignificant, perhaps mischievous, topics, and he cannot repress a sigh, that powers so noble should be lavished on pursuits so worthless. We would not invest youth with the gravity of age; for who would exchange the bloom of Spring, for the yellowing leaf of Autumn? But amongst the allurements which surround youth, some, at least, should solicit them into the paths of usefulness and virtue. Temptations to dissipation, or to frivolity, should not be left to act alone, and without some antagonist inducements. Let us, at least, make the way which leads to right, as open and accessible, as that which leads to wrong. Children are governed by circumstances, as well as by innate tendencies. If we cannot prescribe the

natural tendencies of children, we can prescribe, to a great extent, the circumstances in which they are placed. The first may belong to the jurisdiction of Nature ; the last is within our own. If we see, where we ourselves, or our fathers, have been neglectful, let us profit by the discovery ; for that lamentation is useless, which does not prompt us to seek and apply a remedy.

The title, at the head of this article, has suggested these reflections. The benefit of libraries, in Common Schools, is a modern discovery. But it is one, which is destined to increase, almost indefinitely, the efficiency of those schools. It is an essential step, in carrying out the noble plan of public instruction. The State of New York has the honor of first adopting it. In the year 1838, that great State set apart, from its school fund, the sum of one hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars, to be specially appropriated to the purchase of District School Libraries. In 1839, it repeated the enactment, by setting apart another equal sum, for the same object ; so that the appropriation by the State now amounts, for this single purpose, to the sum of three hundred and thirty thousand dollars. This amount is to be distributed to the several towns and districts, on condition of their raising an equal sum, to be united with the former, and expended for the same purpose. The common fund rises to the sum of six hundred and sixty thousand dollars. This treasure is to be converted into books,—the aliment of intellect and morals ;—for good books are to the young mind, what the warming sun and the refreshing rain of Spring are to the seeds, which have lain dormant, in the frosts of Winter. They are more ; for they may save from that which is worse than death, as well as bless with that which is better than life. How poor was the gift of Midas, fabled to possess the power of turning whatever he touched into gold, compared with the power of turning gold into knowledge, and wisdom, and virtue ! How glorious is the prerogative of the legislator, when he faithfully uses his privileges for the benefit of his race !—Though he fill but a brief hour of political existence, yet, in that hour, he can speak a word, which shall enhance the happiness of posterity, at the distance of a thousand years. This is the only worthy immortality upon earth ;—not to leave a name, to be upon the lips of men, but to do acts, which shall improve the condition of men, through the flowing ages.

The first legislative action of Massachusetts, on the subject of District School Libraries, was in 1837. By the act of April 12th, of that year, the districts were authorized to raise, by tax, a sum not exceeding thirty dollars, for the first year, and ten dollars, for any succeeding year, to be expended in the purchase of a school library and apparatus, for the use of the children in the schools. Although almost three years have elapsed, yet very few districts have established a library, under this law. Only about fifty Common School libraries exist, in the three thousand districts in the State ; and but few of these have been obtained under the act of 1837. In most cases, the districts have been indebted to private subscription, or individual generosity. When we consider, how great is the want, how obvious the advantages, how trifling the burden, of procuring a library for every district in the Commonwealth, it is manifest, that some inherent and almost insuperable difficulty must have stood in the way of their introduction, or their number, at the present time, would have been much larger than it is.

It may be a half-hour well spent, to consider the principal obstacles, which have hitherto barred out so preëminent a good ; and to see, also, whether something, in the mean time, has not been done, by which those obstacles may be removed or surmounted. To make our views more simple and intelligible, we will present a case, the leading features of which have doubtless already occurred, in different districts in the State.

Suppose, after the promulgation of the law of 1837, some two or three of the most liberal-minded and intelligent friends of the schools had desired that the district, of which they were members, should obtain a library. The

first step, of course, would have been, to call a district school meeting. At this meeting, some friend of the project would set forth its claims. He would, of course, dwell upon the facilities which a library would furnish, at all times, to the children, for useful mental occupation ; he would speak of time, redeemed from idleness and from that wantonness of juvenile mirth, that tends to mischievous habits, and, if unchecked and undiverted, grows up into adult vice ; he would advert to the wealth of information it would dispense, and to the nobleness of action it would inspire ;—thus, wherever its influences flowed, making its effects, in improved conduct and a more elevated character, as visible to the mental vision, as the vigorous growth of meadows, which are watered by an enriching stream, is to the natural eye. He would explain the wonderful results of mere tendencies ; how, with but few exceptions, a uniform bias, on one side or the other, during the years of minority, settles destiny for life,—a truth almost wholly overlooked by the mass of men ; and he would illustrate,—not painting from fancy, but copying from some original fact,—how wide asunder, is the termination of paths, whose first divergency is scarcely perceptible. He would enumerate some of the exposures, to which active-minded children are now cruelly subjected, from the want of an attractive employment ; how their superabundant energy is tempted to flow out into acts of childish roguery, where, at first, the gamesomeness and fun predominate over the malice, but, at last, the malice gets the ascendancy over them ; how they are tempted to occupy their leisure with games of chance,—a habit of which ripens and matures into a love of gambling, of dissipation, of horse-racing, of tavern-haunting, of drinking, of drunkenness, of death ; or how, from a constant seeking after excitements, from a want of a stable foundation of truth, unsettled habits and a volatility of thought are acquired, which, of course, are followed by inconstancy of purpose and of action, and lead outward and onward to unthriftiness, to penury, and the poor-house, and, at least, to temporal perdition. He would show, that all these evils are neighbors, living on the same road, and not very far apart. On the other hand, he would show, how a habit of intelligent reading, not only enriches the mind with facts, but creates ability, and thus enables it to take up and master many more of the innumerable problems of life, which observation and experience force upon it ; that the reading of good books, gives both the love and the power of instructive and elevating conversation, and tends to prudence, and wisdom, and benevolence in action ; that it would turn the whole current of social feeling, which flows impetuously in the youthful mind, towards associations, formed for the mutual improvement of the members ; towards the reading-room, instead of the ball-room, the lecture-room, instead of the theatre ; that it would refine and elevate the social intercourse between the sexes, which has so decisive a bearing upon the *indirect* education of children ; or, if it led to privacy and seclusion at all, it would be the retirement of the study, where great plans for human advancement are devised and matured, and not the secrecy of the gaming-table, where abominations are wrought.

After the presentation of these and similar views, it is not too much to presume, that each rational voter in the district would say, that a school library would, indeed, be a most valuable possession,—worthy of the cost, and of ten times the cost ; and that, if there were no impediments in the way of obtaining one, he should esteem the payment of his share of the expense, a privilege, and not a burden.

But, at this point, another member of the meeting might arise, and, not denying, but approving, ratifying, endorsing, all that had been said, of the advantages of a district school library, might proceed to inquire, in what manner, and by whose agency, a selection of the books to compose it, should be made. There are, he would observe, excellent books for men ; but, being above the capacities of children and destitute of explanations, they



are unsuitable for the juvenile mind. Because books are full of interest and instruction for the mature minds of men, it is so far from following, that the same books would be interesting and instructive to the immature minds of children, that the reverse is more near to the truth. Men may be pleased and improved with children's books ; but not children with men's books. In this heterogeneous world, adaptation is the wisest part of wisdom. Show a list of the titles of a hundred books, prepared expressly for children, by intelligent and experienced men, who know the wants of children, and this objection shall be gladly abandoned.

Another objection grows out of the expense. If a hundred of the best books for children, now extant, are to be procured, they must be picked up, here and there, at almost a hundred places. The best books must be sought after, from store to store, and, perhaps, from city to city. This, of course, would draw after it, the enhanced cost of retail prices. And the books, when procured, would be as unlike each other, as possible,—of all sizes, types, style of mechanical execution, &c. This want of uniformity would go deeper than the workmanship ; there would be no order, system, or gradation according to intellectual capacity, in their contents.

Again, is there any one in this district fully competent to make the most judicious selection ? Is there any one amongst us, acquainted with a thousand, or five hundred, of the best works in the market ; and who, acting on his own knowledge, can select from that number, a hundred of the most suitable volumes, or of the least exceptionable ones ? Is there any one, who, being without the knowledge now, will volunteer the labor to acquire it, and give us the benefit of it ? This district, like more than half the districts in the State, does not contain a man in it, whose course of life has led him to an extensive acquaintance with books ; with all the authors who have written on the same subject ; with the latest and most approved editions ; with common prices, &c. This is a kind of knowledge, which very few men,—even including educated men,—possess ; and, therefore, the great majority, even of the best qualified men, would be liable to be imposed upon, though acting with all their sagacity and intelligence.

But a difficulty, of a nature far more serious, presents itself. Until a very recent period, the human mind had been debarred from promulgating its own views of truth, on almost the entire range of subjects within its ken. Governments have seized men, as soon as they came into the world, and, having written down certain dogmas, they have said to one class of men, *these* you shall teach, and, to other classes of men, *these* you shall learn and believe. Governments have drawn their circle around one little spot in the infinite universe of thought, and have said to nations of men,—within this circle is all truth, and here you shall stay forever. And when souls, caught by the splendid vision of truth beyond that narrow circle, have attempted to burst its limits, and lay hold on the glorious reality, government has driven them back with fire and sword, or seized and destroyed them, at once. Those within the circle, seeing the fate of those who had broken its bounds, trembled for their own ; and, while some sought security in voluntary blindness, others found it in real blindness. But, at last, the barriers were demolished. The Protestant cry was raised, that each man might think as he pleased ; that each might go forth, and dwell in the region of belief which seemed to him most fair and most true,—most brightened by the approving smile of his Maker. Then ensued the grand rush of opinions, out of the old, coercive limits. The present innumerable forms of belief and opinion,—almost exhausting possibility,—show, in what different directions an escape was made from that dreadful imprisonment. Out of the sphere of pure mathematics, rarely an opinion, in all the regions of morality, religion, or government, remains, as it was, two centuries ago. It seems, almost, as though it had been an object, to believe what had been disbelieved before, and to cast aside, with scorn, every old form of faith,—at

least, in the sense in which it had been before held and revered. Hence the endless diversities and contradictions of opinion, in our times ; and, on those subjects which are most dear to man, either as a mortal or an immortal being, the widest variety and the fiercest conflict. The two subjects, respecting which, men, for ages, had been most straitened, pent up, walled in on every side, were those, which embraced the political condition and the future destinies of man ; that is, the relations of men to each other in the social compact, and the relations of man to his Maker. No wonder, that men, bursting from thralldom, should rush into error. No wonder, that the opinions and convictions of men should be partial, incomplete, and, therefore, false, before they have had time to collect the proofs, necessary for the establishment of truth. And, perhaps, we ought not to be surprised, that, in the mean time, each one should seize, and hold with unyielding tenacity, those opinions, which, to his peculiar mind, appeared to possess the holy reality of truth ; and that he should denounce all conflicting opinions as heretical and ruinous.

But, amid this fierce collision of doctrines, the schoolhouse, by common consent, is neutral ground. Men, holding the most adverse opinions, are taxed to support the schools. The school is the only place, where the mass of the children can find the means of instruction ; and therefore it is, that proselytism to religious creeds, or to partisan doctrines, would be an aggression upon private rights,—an aggression so much the more intolerable, because the very sufferer himself is compelled to contribute the means by which the wrong is inflicted. One great object of the schools,—an object dear to the heart of every lover of his kind,—is, to exercise and to strengthen the minds of the children ; to save them from vicious associations and from depraved habits ; to lead them to the perception and the love of truth in the exact sciences ; to give them a delight in exploring the vast world of natural history, where, at every step, they are surrounded by proofs of the greatness and goodness of God ; and thus to prepare them, as far as by any human means they can be prepared, to bring a clearer and stronger mind, and less selfish and impure affections,—a more ardent love of man and a higher reverence for God, to the decision of those momentous questions of time and eternity, which, in the last resort, each man must not only decide for himself, but must abide the consequences of his decision. One thing, to be hoped from the Common Schools, then, is, that they will be instrumental in rearing a generation of men, less blinded by prejudice, more in love with truth, more clear in their perceptions, more just in their reasonings, than the majority of their fathers have been. Amongst such a generation, truth will have a double chance of being adopted ; error, a double exposure to rejection ; benevolence, more followers ; crime, less victims.

Now, who, within the limits of this school district, is competent to the selection of the proposed books ? What man is there, who either has read, or will assume the labor of reading, even a hundred books, in order to determine, whether there is any thing in any of their pages, which substantially encroaches upon the principles that he knows his neighbor holds sacred ? In regard to this point, let us not be captious. Let us not except, on account of slight shades of difference. Not any two minds, any more than any two eyes, can see hues and proportions exactly alike. The former is not less a moral, than the latter is a natural, impossibility. But, supposing one man can be found amongst us, who will voluntarily and gratuitously undertake to examine a hundred books, is there a majority in the district, who will intrust so difficult and responsible a task to him, and agree to abide by the result,—to pay beforehand for that, by which they may be aggrieved afterwards ? If the agent, nominated to make the selection, be an active and prominent member of one religious denomination, can the members of opposing denominations confide in his integrity ? If he be a champion in one or the other great political parties, now engaged in a death-like strug-

gle for ascendancy, can his political antagonists concede to him the privilege of selecting the books, on which their children's minds are to be modelled ?

Now, did the argument rest here, one could hardly expect, perhaps hardly wish, that the question should not be carried against the library.

But suppose, at this point, another member should arise, and, declaring his full assent to all the views advanced in favor of a library, both on account of pupils, parents, and teacher, and conceding, also, that, if the objection, growing out of the want of a proper series of books, and the inherent difficulty in regard to their selection, could not be removed, he must withhold his vote from the project, notwithstanding his strong predilections in its favor,—should then proceed to detail the following facts and considerations.

All the arguments, urged against the procurement of a library for the district, were once true, but they are true no longer. The Legislature of the Commonwealth has established a Board of Education. It has conferred on them no power whatever, to control the schools, or to interfere with their management ; but it has made it their duty to collect and diffuse information, to suggest, to advise, and to assist, and thus to enable the schools to improve themselves,—“to the end,” as it is expressed in the language of the act which created them, “that all children in this Commonwealth, who depend upon Common Schools for instruction, may have the best education, which those schools can be made to impart.” As it was to be the duty of the Board, to advise and counsel upon subjects, in which the whole community was concerned, this fact was duly regarded in their constitution. They were not taken from one section of the State, but from different sections, so that they live almost equidistant from each other, and may be almost said to represent equal portions of territory and of population. They were not selected from one political party, or religious denomination, but from both political parties, and from all the leading religious denominations in the State. One of the measures early projected, by the Board, for the advancement of the schools, was the preparation of a library of suitable books for children and youth. The plan contemplated two series, of fifty volumes each ; one, of the 18mo. size, adapted for children, the other, of the duodecimo size, intended for youth. The Board proceeded to make proposals to various publishers, to undertake the work. The leading propositions were, that the enterprise should be undertaken wholly at the publishers' risk, neither the Board nor the State having any pecuniary interest in it ; that the work should be executed according to sample ; that it should be offered to all the public schools in Massachusetts, who might wish to purchase, at a sum never to exceed the stipulated amount ; that the whole should be executed in the most durable and workmanlike manner, and in such style, as to type, paper, binding, &c., as the Board should direct ; that no work should be included in the series, which had not received the unanimous approval of the Board ; and that, on their part, in consideration of such undertaking, the Board would examine a sufficient number of works to complete the proposed series, and give to the publishers whatever benefit they could derive from an announcement to the public, that the work had the unanimous sanction or approbation of their body. The Board were to decide upon the books, as a jury decide upon a cause in court, each member having a veto upon all the rest.

The firm of Messrs. Marsh, Capen, and Lyon (to which the name of Dr. Webb has since been added) tendered propositions, very much more favorable, than any received from any other quarter, and an arrangement was forthwith concluded with them.

It may be here asked, why contract with one firm, to do all this work ? Why not permit any firm to propose any work, and, if it be suitable, then incorporate it into the series ? Because the privilege of preparing the whole



series was the only equivalent, or compensation, for the lowness of the price at which the works were to be offered to the schools. Without the right of supplying the whole, the publishers must have charged fifteen or twenty per cent. more, for whatever they should supply. The purchasers, therefore,—that is, the school districts,—were to have the benefit of the reduced price ; a fact deemed of far more consequence by the Board, than that a few publishers, more or less, should prepare and sell the works, at an advanced rate, and divide larger profits amongst themselves.

On a careful and thorough examination, it was soon found, that there were very few books extant, suitable, in all respects, for children ; or, at least, that there were very few, which might not be essentially improved. In regard to some books, a more full and complete exposition of the subjects treated of seemed desirable. In regard to others, notes, explanations, glossaries, &c., were necessary, to make them intelligible to children. New works, also, were to be prepared. For this purpose, the publishers have obtained the services of the most popular and talented authors in this country, either to re-edit existing works, or to prepare new ones. The most eminent literary men have been, or now are, engaged in the execution of the plan. The names of Washington Irving, Dr. Wayland, the two Everetts, Greenwood, Bigelow, Rantoul, Silliman, Judge Story, Professors Lieber, Potter, Stowe, Edwards, Olmsted, Alden, Tucker, Judge Porter, &c., &c., are a pledge to the public, that nothing has been omitted, which can give the value of adaptation and fitness to the series. It is not too much to say, that no work has ever issued from the press in this country, to the preparation of which, one half so much knowledge and ability has been devoted.

And now, for the application of these facts to the question of purchasing a district school library.

The first objection was, that no series of suitable books exists. But, if the largest experience, the highest skill and talent, the best practical judgment, in our community, can select or prepare suitable books for the children and youth of the State, this objection is removed. If not now removed, an age must go by before it can be ; for this whole country does not furnish the same number of other men, so competent for the labor.

The second objection was, that, if existing books were to be purchased, they must be picked up,—a half-dozen books, or a single book, at a store, or in a city,—and, of course, that they must be purchased at high retail prices. The series of books, now in the course of preparation, are offered at a rate, much lower than the common price for books of the same size and of far inferior workmanship. The books are all handsomely and uniformly bound, and this, though a consideration of no moment, compared with their contents, is still one, which no man would wholly disregard. It affords a genuine gratification to all persons of taste and elegance, and it will be the means of cultivating those qualities in the children who read them.

The third,—and, if not removed, an insurmountable objection,—was, the want of some sufficient guard or security, against the introduction of partisan or sectarian books. This difficulty has been directly met, and entirely removed. Not enough of it is left, to serve as a pretence for sophistry. The names of the members of the Board may be found in the first volume of the library, which, on their official and personal responsibility, they have sanctioned. They are the following :—

EDWARD EVERETT,  
GEORGE HULL,  
EMERSON DAVIS,  
EDMUND DWIGHT,  
GEORGE PUTNAM,

ROBERT RANTOUL, JR.,  
THOMAS ROBBINS,  
JARED SPARKS,  
CHARLES HUDSON,  
GEORGE N. BRIGGS.

The character of these gentlemen is a sufficient guaranty, that the trust reposed in them will be executed with fidelity. There is not a man, belonging

to either of the great political or religious portions, into which our community is unhappily divided, but will find, in the above list of names, a watchful sentinel, to guard his social and spiritual rights against aggression. Suppose I am a member of the Calvinistic or orthodox Congregational denomination, and I deem it a paramount duty to avert from the eyes and ears of my children, the peculiar views of the Baptists, Unitarians, or Universalists. I see in the list, the name of the Rev. Emerson Davis, of Westfield,—an orthodox Congregational clergyman, known to his brethren, throughout the State, as a man of sound judgment, of excellent feelings, of firm and undoubting steadfastness of faith. Further down, in the list, I see the name of the Rev. Dr. Robbins, of Rochester, a venerable gentleman and most learned scholar, who, for more than a quarter of a century, has been the pastor of an orthodox church and society, and upon whose soundness in the faith, no suspicion has ever been cast. Without mentioning any other names, or making further inquiry, can I ask for any higher assurance, that the books examined and sanctioned by these gentlemen, will be found to contain nothing, at which any orthodox man can justly take offence. Suppose I am a Baptist, and, though anxious for a library, would not accept one, on the condition that my own peculiar denominational views were to be impugned by it. When I see that the Hon. George N. Briggs,—for many years a member of a Baptist church in the town where he resides,—has given his approval to the books, can I, with decency, any longer retain my suspicions ;—if suspicions, I ever had ? That gentleman for many years past has been a Representative in the Congress of the United States, and surely, it would be arrogant in me to say, that he was not as capable as myself, of detecting whatever is objectionable in them. Or suppose I dissent from the Trinitarian faith, in any of the modifications in which it is held, and enrol myself either with the Unitarians, or with the Universalists ; are there not Mr. Putnam, and Mr. Hudson, both clergymen, who will, *respectively*, guard every point, and see that the distinctive views, neither of Calvin nor of Hopkins, shall find their way to the children's minds, through these neutral and impartial pages ? But I need not dwell longer on this point. All will perceive, that every pledge for fairness, every security against proselytism, has been given. Should any glimmer, any effluvium, or infinitesimal particle, of doctrines adverse to mine, permeate through all these guards, and become just perceptible or discoverable, in the books, to the keenest sight or scent, I cannot surely have any great faith, even in my own faith, if I am filled with dread, lest its foundations should be subverted or unsettled by them. And so as it regards political views,—are not the names of Governor Everett and Mr. Rantoul a sufficient pledge, that the library is tainted by no false doctrines on sub-treasuries or banks ?

As we have supposed a district school meeting and a debate ; we may as well suppose the result,—viz. that a vote was unanimously passed, to procure a Library.

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#### DISTRICT SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN NEW YORK.

IN the year 1835, the Legislature of the State of New York authorized its school districts to raise, by tax, a sum not exceeding twenty dollars, for the first year, and ten dollars, for every succeeding year, for establishing District School Libraries. The law remained for three years, almost a dead letter upon the statute book ;—very few of the districts exercising the power it granted. But, in 1838, GOVERNOR MARCY, in his Inaugural Address, called the attention of the Legislature to the subject again, in the remarks, which we copy below. During the session of that year, the GLORIOUS LAW was passed, for encouraging the districts to procure libraries, by appropriating a portion of the income of the school fund, to such dis-



tricts as would raise, by tax, an equal sum, for the same purpose ; and, *at the present time*, there is scarcely a district in the State, which has not taken, or is not now taking, the requisite steps for the procurement of a District School Library. How long will the recommendation of the Governor, and the law subsequently passed in pursuance of it, outlive those party contests, which, at the time, occupied so much larger a share of the public attention ! When the collisions and bickerings of that day are forgotten, the influences of this law will flow on, widening and deepening, in an endless progression of usefulness.—Ed.

“All classes of our constituents will look, with much anxiety and high hopes, to your proceedings on the subject of Education. As the friends of civil liberty, and the possessors of the legislative power of a free people, we are commanded by the dictates of reason, and the voice of duty, to provide liberally and efficiently for Popular Instruction.

“An ignorant people would not long retain, if, by chance, they should acquire, civil liberty, and would never rightly appreciate its benefits. To the intelligence of those who have preceded us, are we mainly indebted for our free institutions, and all the blessings that attend them ; and it is only upon the intelligence of those who must be the future guardians of these institutions, that we can confidently rest our hopes of having them perpetuated and improved. Popular education is, therefore, identified with civil liberty. We owe to both, the devotion of our best faculties, and the wisest application of the means placed at our disposal, for sustaining and promoting them.

“In anticipation of the income, to be derived from the moneys belonging to the United States, deposited with this State, a recommendation was submitted to the last Legislature, to apply it, exclusively, to the purposes of education. This income was then estimated at three hundred thousand dollars, annually, during the time the deposit should remain with the State. The plan proposed for the appropriation of this sum was, to increase the annual distribution to the Common Schools to twice the present sum, thereby making it two hundred and twenty thousand dollars ; to devote a liberal portion of it to the academies, in such a manner, as not only to increase the amount annually distributed to them, but to augment the Literature fund, and to add the remainder to the capital of the Common School fund. The general proposition, of applying this income to the cause of education, appears to have been coincident with public opinion ; and I do not doubt that it will receive your sanction. Though I should regret to see the least departure from the generally approved suggestion of appropriating this income exclusively to the purposes of education, yet it is not improbable that some useful modifications may be made in the details of the plan. There are, undoubtedly, other objects connected, directly, with education, besides those already specified, to which pecuniary assistance might be extended, with great advantage.

“Elementary instruction is only the first stage in the progress of education, and but little is accomplished, if there be no advance beyond it. To make ample provision, for conducting all the children in the State through this stage, should undoubtedly continue to be, as it hitherto has been, the first and main object of the Legislature ; yet, all that public sentiment demands, and the public good requires, will not be achieved, until needful facilities are furnished, to a career of self-instruction. District libraries are well calculated to exert a beneficial influence, in this respect. It is to be regretted, that the opportunity, offered to the school districts for establishing them, has not been embraced, with a zeal commensurate to their importance. Few of the districts, compared with the whole number in the State, have manifested a willingness to levy the small sum authorized by law, for the purpose of establishing them. In view of their unquestionable

usefulness, I would respectfully recommend, that some further measures be adopted, for introducing them more generally into the districts.

"The law now authorizes the inhabitants of each district, at their option, to raise, the first year, twenty dollars, for establishing a library, and ten dollars, in each subsequent year, for enlarging it. Two modes present themselves, for advancing this laudable object. One is, to make the assessment of the tax compulsory; and the other, to devote a small amount of the fund, now at your disposal, to each district, which shall raise by taxation, an equal amount, for the establishment of a district library.

"I recommend to your favorable consideration, the latter mode, under a belief, that it would meet with more general approbation than a compulsory assessment, and enlist an interest in behalf of those establishments, that will not only insure the ultimate introduction of them into the several school districts, but increase their usefulness."

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[For the Common School Journal.]

### ON THE MOTIVES TO BE ADDRESSED, IN THE INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN.

NO. VII.

#### THE GENEROUS AFFECTIONS.

DEAR SIR,—I verily believe, that every school might be ultimately altogether, or, at least, in a great degree, governed and controlled by an appeal only to the highest, and most generous, affections that belong to the human character. I admit, that it would be often difficult, and to some of us, impossible. But the fault would be with ourselves. It would be, because we have not, in a sufficiently ample measure, the qualities that we would call up in our pupils. I suppose that every child has within him something that responds to every form of noble action, to every expression of disinterested kindness. He has, we too sadly see, a capacity for much that is bad; but he has also the germs of all that is good and excellent.

But to avail himself of these principles, the teacher must have them in his own character. How can he touch the spring of generous feeling in his pupils, who, in his intercourse with them, is habitually influenced by low and selfish motives?

He should, in the first place, have a strong sympathy with childhood; and he should not be ashamed to feel and express it. The affections, as truly as genius, are always young. They never grow old. And, if they did, life is so short, that the oldest of us have to look back but a very few years, to enter again into the feelings of childhood. Without sympathy, the teacher cannot understand, and, by consequence, cannot direct, the feelings of the child. He is endeavoring to act upon the unknown.

But a ready sympathy will enable him to understand the difficulties that a child meets with,—how obscure the plainest thing may appear to him; how long, the shortest; and how soon his scanty stock of patience is exhausted. It is probably from this quicker sympathy, that females are so much better qualified to teach young children, than we are; perhaps, also, from the silly pride that is apt to prevail among men, particularly those of obtuse perceptions, and the savage idea, that want of sympathy is not a want, that hardness is manliness; forgetting, or never dreaming, that the noblest men, those of the best endowments, have been always marked for the most extensive sympathies.

The most generous allowance should be made for the faults of children; the most lenient construction should be put upon every offence. We may easily remember, if we will, that our own faults, when children, were far more frequently those of ignorance, of thoughtlessness, of impulse, or of weakness, than faults of design or of malice. These always were, and always will be, the sources of most of their faults. How unreasonable to expect to

find children without them. How unreasonable and wicked, too, when these causes are so obvious, to look deeper, and search for any thing worse. Impute to children the best motives, and you create them ;—or rather, you bring into action those principles, implanted in their hearts, which produce the best motives. We cannot doubt that the capacity, for all that is good and noble, exists in every child, and only needs to be roused and brought out by the teacher. His power of doing this will be in proportion to the elevation of his own character. As, in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. Whatever virtue the teacher can form in himself, he will be able to reproduce in his pupils. What a motive this, to build up his own character, in all manly and generous qualities.

In the second place, (I am afraid my firstlies and secondlies will give my letters very much the aspect of sermons, which you, who know me, know very well I could not write nor preach ; but I must have heads, and, therefore, repeat, in the second place,) a teacher must show entire confidence in the child. And not only show it, but feel it. Confidence begets confidence, as distrust begets distrust and falsehood. There is no other so ready way, I repeat it, to produce falsehood in a child, as to doubt his word. And it must be so. A doubter is a liar. One who was himself perfectly true, could never suspect. It is true, that there is a distrust produced by the experience of other men's falsehood. But this belongs to the world. It cannot be felt by a teacher towards a child. There is also a distrust in others, that comes from a sense of our own weakness, and is a part of Christian humility.

Real truth, like charity, thinketh no evil. Distrust, therefore, to the whole extent of the influence a teacher has, corrupts the principle of truth, and generates falsehood. It is as if he said to the child, "I distrust you, because I believe that you are like myself." But a child, who feels that his teacher confides in him, has all the strength of the teacher's character, on the side of his own good promptings and resolutions. He can, perhaps, resist the temptation from within, if all from without is removed. The teacher's smile gives him confidence in himself. He is safe, because he is in good company. But let the teacher meet him with the dark leer of suspicion, and the trembling flame of truth within him goes out. "What am I to lose," thinks the child, "by this falsehood ? He already looks upon me as a liar ; and, by a lie, I may save myself from the consequences of this offence." For, thus, is falsehood always cowardly, and full of fear. Let us remove the fear, if we would prevent the lie.

The teacher should take care, in the third place, to make it felt, that he is on the side of his pupils. This is often difficult. In some schools, the master has always been looked upon as an enemy, and the impression comes down, by inheritance, to all the pupils. The same, too, is the impression of parents, which makes the case still harder. But the difficulty will cease, in the case of one who has a genuine sympathy for his children. They are quick to find out their friends ; and, if he is a true friend, and a prudent, wise, and confident, friend, they cannot miss of finding it out, sooner or later. But this is a great point, and worth striving for, and waiting for, long and patiently.

It seems almost necessary, considering the low standard of character and acquirement, and especially of refinement of character, in persons sometimes allowed and employed to take the sacred office of teacher, to insist upon the common truth,—almost too common even for a proverb,—that we learn more from imitation than precept. It is in every body's mouth, and yet how much disregarded in practice. What higher object can be proposed, than to teach the moral virtues ?—justice, liberality, charity, gentleness, generosity, humility ? But how can he properly teach justice, who is habitually unfair ? or liberality, who is mean-spirited ? or charity, who is close and suspicious ? or gentleness, who is rough and overbearing ? or



generosity, who is over-reaching and selfish? or humility, who is proud, and querulous, and self-sufficient?

The true teacher should have an exalted conception of the noblest endowments of the character, and should, if it were possible, show them all in his own life and deportment. Has any one greater need of them? Would any one make a better use of them? Yours, very truly, G. B. E.

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#### PRIZES.

[We give below a *real* extract, from a *real* letter, written by a girl, *really* but twelve years of age. It was handed to us, with the accompanying remarks, by an eminent professional gentleman of a neighboring county, in whose fidelity in reporting, the most implicit faith may be reposed. The extract shows, that, on questions, whose correct decision depends upon the feelings, unsophisticated childhood begins, where the profoundest philosophy leaves off. Were we a disciple of Miss Martineau, and a believer in the expediency of electing women to fill civil offices, we should wish that this little girl might be placed on some of the school committees.—Ed.]

DEAR SIR,—One of my children had a letter, from a female cousin, of twelve years of age, to-day, some passages in which struck me so favorably as showing the ill-judged system of stimulating by *prizes*, &c., that I am inclined to copy them, in the hope that this picture, of the real feeling and operation of such systems upon young pupils, may lead you to make some remarks in your School Journal.

“Our term will close in the course of next week, so that all my thoughts and time are now given to preparation for examination, which is to be three days in length. I must say, that it is not without some feelings of dread, that I look forward to the time, when I shall be obliged to make a *parade* of my acquisitions. \* \* \* \* \* There are four prizes offered for the four best compositions. I have always had a great dislike to ‘examinations’ and ‘prizes;’ and, although our teachers have brought forward many arguments, to prove their utility, yet I have not been able to overcome my prejudice to them. In the first place, I don’t think such examinations are a good test of scholarship. A timid and retiring person is much more apt to get confused, and would recite (or rather show off,—for what is it but showing off?) to much less advantage, at such a time, than one would, who was much her inferior, yet had more boldness and confidence.

“And as to prizes, they scarcely ever fail to create some degree of bad feeling. People must have but a poor opinion of our motives for writing and studying, if they think that the hope of obtaining a prize would be any inducement to great effort. It makes me think of promising a child a sugar-plum, if it will only be good.”

This appears to me a very good text, and I think a statement like this, of a very intelligent girl, of the age I have named, does her credit. It struck me so forcibly, that I could not resist sending it. I would beg leave to add, that more than one of our medical men can furnish you with fearful instances, of the effect of the stimulating system, (by unworthy motives,) upon the *mind* as well as the *body*.

Very respectfully, yours, &c.

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EFFECT OF SCHOOL-EMULATION IN PRODUCING A DISHONEST ACT, EVEN ON THE INGENUOUS MIND OF SIR WALTER SCOTT,—“There was a boy,” says Sir Walter, “in my class at school, who stood always at the top, nor could I, with all my efforts, supplant him. Day came after day, and still he kept his place, do what I would; till, at length I observed, that, when a question was asked him, he always fumbled with his fingers at a particular button, in the lower part of his waistcoat. To remove it, therefore, became expedient in my eyes; and, in an evil moment, it was removed, with a knife. Great was my

anxiety to know the success of my measure ; and it succeeded too well. When the boy was again questioned, his fingers sought again for the button, but it was not to be found. In his distress he looked down for it ; it was to be seen, no more than to be felt. He stood confounded, and I took possession of his place ; nor did he ever recover it, or ever, I believe, suspect who was the author of his wrong. Often, in afterlife, has the sight of him smote me, as I passed by him ; and often have I resolved to make him some reparation ; but it ended in good resolutions. Though I never renewed my acquaintance with him, I often saw him ; for he filled some inferior office in one of the courts of law at Edinburgh. Poor fellow ! I believe he is dead ; he took early to drinking."

In a less honorable and generous mind than Scott's, this meanness of cutting off a button in order to disconcert and embarrass a school-fellow, and by that means to steal his place, would have led, in afterlife, to the indulgence of all envious feelings, or to the fabrication of falsehoods against a rival or competitor, in literature or in politics.—ED.

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#### FURTHER EXTRACTS FROM MR. WEST'S LECTURE, ON MANUALS.

[Continued from page 64.]

When the recitation is conducted closely by the book, and the scholar is required to tell what, and only what, is put down in the book, and the teacher avoids making any remarks, it becomes, instead of being an occasion for the teacher to call into exercise the powers of the scholars, and for him to throw light upon the dark passages, and fill up the deficiencies, merely a time for him to test how faithfully the scholars have performed the task assigned them ; to see which has the best memory. The teacher loses this opportunity, when the scholars are close to him, of giving them the impression that he is their friend, and that he has an affection for them, and strengthens the impression of his being their master,—their task-master. The opportunity, of sprinkling into the school duties something of the amusing and enlivening, is lost ; and the feeling of confinement and necessity, which so paralyzes the exertions of the scholars, is further increased. When the scholar comes from the seat,—hard and perpendicular, perhaps,—where he has been conning his book, to the no less hard recitation bench, or, perhaps to stand with military straightness, during the time of reciting, it would not be wonderful, if, after the dull time of reciting has been gotten through with, the teacher should hear long-drawn sighs from young and short bosoms, or see what, in the countenance and manner, visibly represented a whole series of sighs.

We are far from wishing to make the schoolroom only an enclosed part of the play ground. We would have the scholars remember, that, as soon as they step over the threshold, their feelings are to undergo a change ; but we would, at the same time, have them feel, that the same sun, that shines unobstructed upon the well-trodden grass of the play ground, shines also through the windows upon the school floor, and not that, when they enter the schoolroom, they pass from day into night, from night into darkness. But, while we would have them refrain, in the schoolroom, from many things, appropriate and desirable in the hours of play, and on the play ground, and would have them bear in mind, that there is a time and place for every thing, we think that care should be taken, not to increase, unnecessarily, the chill that comes over them, when they change the free air of heaven, for the pent-up air of the schoolroom ; when they give up their sports, in which they have the sole management, for the in-school work, which is, and must be, marked out for them, and required of them, by others ; when, instead of following the impulse of the moment, as they have just been doing, they must take care, lest they unwittingly give way to their feelings. Now, we think that, with all rules observed, with proper and de-

corous behavior, and with due respect to time and place, the recitation may be made an occasion for partially unbending the tight-bound springs, for brushing off the dullness that may have settled down upon the minds of the scholars, and for calling the mental powers into action under great advantages. But this cannot be, when the teacher confines himself, strictly and solely, to the text-book ; when the scholar finds, that all, that it is important for him to do, is, to be able to repeat what is laid down upon the pages of the book ; and that if he, when preparing his lesson, commits, and, at the same time, understands, all this well, he must expect nothing more, at recitation, than to hear the lesson repeated over, with blunder upon blunder, with little or no light thrown upon what was comparatively dark to him, and, perhaps, by the mental action to which he is subjected, even darkness spread over what was comparatively light before. What, in this way of reciting, can prevent the call to recitation from sounding unpleasantly upon the ears of both industrious and idle ? What can prevent this or that study, the very name of the book or author, the time of reciting, from becoming distasteful to the pupils, who recite in this barren way ? It is distasteful to the diligent, because they gain nothing new, and have only an opportunity of trying strength with each other, which may, in itself, be pleasant, at least, to the victor ; but even this pleasure is counterbalanced, by the continual fear, too often realized, of having the weak points of their armor detected by the master. It is distasteful to the idle, because they are then more immediately under the master's eye ; because their idleness, which, by some of the contrivances of youthful ingenuity, they have been able, in a measure, to conceal, will be betrayed, without screen, by the way in which they recite their lessons ; and because, what had no attraction before, when the page was first reached, becomes, now, while reciting, actually repulsive, —if, indeed, they get their minds near enough to the centre of action to be repelled.

It may not be said, that the ideas in the book are pleasing ; that the author has a happy way of illustrating the subject, and knows well how to impart knowledge to the youthful mind ; and, therefore, there need be no danger of the child's becoming disgusted with a study. Let it not be said, that, if care be taken to get a study not much in advance of the age and maturity of the scholars, there need be no fear of their becoming disgusted with it. For we say, that the very fact of its being all marked out and managed by another, of its being obligatory, of its coming round irresistibly, will tend to make, even what might otherwise be pleasant, disgusting. We all know, with how much more pleasure a scholar spends his time, in reading the lesson of his neighbor, than in attending to his own ; but require his neighbor's lesson, which seems so pleasant, of him, and you immediately alter the case. The head, that was self-supported, before, must now be leaned upon one hand ; the bright eye, that was before fixed upon the book, now loses its animation, and seeks, if it may, among objects around, for something attractive. It is the feeling of compulsion, of necessity, that brings about this change. "I do this, because I can't help myself ; I did that, because I wanted to." And this feeling may be lessened, we say, in some degree, or may be increased, by the manner in which recitations are conducted. We do not say, that the right way of conducting recitations will wholly change these feelings of the scholars ; but they will go somewhat towards doing so. And we think it an object of great importance, to make the schoolroom, and the school studies, pleasant to the scholars, if it may be done, without sacrificing the very purposes of the school exercises, and the in-school confinement. We are far from forgetting the rhyme, that tells us what Jack becomes, with "all play and no work."

When the text-book is closely adhered to, and the reader never wanders from the marked-out path, the scholar, by his own style of reasoning, (and often how sound and pertinent that reasoning is !) comes to the conclusion,



that he is unable to add anything to what is put down in the book, and is unwilling to ask any question, but those asked in the book, because he is unable to answer any, but what are answered in the book. Now if the teacher do know more about the study in hand, or can make his knowledge of other things bear upon it, it may be well for him, on account of the aid it may give to his teaching, if the scholars have a good opinion of his ability, to add what he can, to improve what he may, for this reason, aside from the consideration, that a little from the lips of a teacher, whom they respect, and in whom they have confidence, is sometimes of more worth to them, and is likely to be retained longer by them, than much which the book tells them. It should be the settled, though not the professed, object of the teacher, to gain the respect of his pupils, among other things, for his acquisitions, his knowledge. We do not mean to advocate deception, for we would let the scholars know, if need were, that we made no pretension to know every thing. Without making any vain-glorious display of his knowledge, the teacher may show himself so prepared, and so ready, to improve upon what is put down in the book, as to encourage them to propose, for elucidation, what has puzzled them, and to put questions, that may arise in their minds, relative to the lesson. And he should endeavor to make them feel, that, if they come to him for information, upon anything that interests them, though foreign to the school studies, they stand a good chance of receiving it; and that he cares enough about them, to search out an answer to their query, if he cannot give one without searching, though both question and answer may be equally indifferent to him. It is worth a good deal to have the relation between teacher and pupil what it should be; and we think that care, not to be too much confined to the pages of the text-book, will contribute towards making it so, and is, therefore, worthy of the teacher's attention.

When the manual is strictly adhered to,—and it seems to be wrong to go at all out of its path,—the knowledge, which the scholars acquire, will, of course, be only what is to be had from the text-book. A mind, well stored with the information which school books give, may be very ill stored, after all. That information is likely to be of a particular hue, to smell of the book, and not to be, as information, just what is wanted. Besides, if the teacher seem to take everything put down in the book, without any apparent reflection upon it, as he seems, practically, to say to the scholars that he believes, simply because the book says so, he leads them to take for granted, that anything, to be met with in books, is, for that reason, true. Now, if believing any apparently large statement to be true, he lets the scholars see, that he has considered in his own mind, the reasons which go to support the author's statement, and puts them into a train for finding reasons themselves, he teaches them to think for themselves, and to have a reason for what they believe.

When nothing is done at recitation, but the mere repeating of the lesson, and no question, out of the direct path of the book, is put by the teacher, or allowed to be proposed by the scholars, it often happens, that a scholar, if he be at all near to the close of his school education, even though, all along, he has been accustomed to submit passively to the directions of parents and teachers, without troubling himself to think upon the purposes or utility of his studies, is apt to ask himself these questions,—and to ask them at a time, when he feels vexed and worn out with the routine of school discipline, and study,—“Of what use is this study going to be to me? I cannot see the use of studying that book, for I am going to be such and such, or going to do so and so, and how will this serve me, then? What shall I ever want of that?” These are good questions, and they would be more welcome, were it not for the manner with which they are often asked. If they are answered in the right way, and at the right time, it will be well that they were asked. But if the scholar is left to himself to answer them, as they were asked, in a despair of finding any good answer to them, in a

conviction that no good answer could be given to them, so he is little likely to look far for an answer, and will be strengthened in his opinion, that, because nothing, on the moment, comes to his mind, in reply to his queries, these studies are to be of no use to him. And this may be in reference to the most useful study that the scholar is pursuing.

We say, that it is owing, in a measure, if not wholly, to the style of the recitation, that the scholar is induced to ask these questions, or, at least, to ask them in the way in which he does, despairing of hearing any thing said in favor of the studies, and feeling that he is compelled to wear away hour after hour, upon what, to him, is all idle. He sees no connection between a study and his probable future course of life, and there is no one, but the teacher, for him to ask about it. He is disinclined to put so direct a question to him, and such a question, too ; or, perhaps, all that he has had to do with the study, all the recitations he has had in it, all that he has thought himself, or heard others say, about it, leads him to the opinion, that it will be of no use to him ; and nothing, that he has heard the teacher say, at all helps him, and so there ends the matter with him. He has made up his mind, and it is no easy thing to alter it.

I doubt not that every teacher, who has advanced scholars, has met with such instances of pupils, who,—just at the time when they are old enough to appreciate the purposes of studies, when they ought to apply themselves with great diligence, seeing how much time is gone, and how little remains to them,—become tired of school, and long to be free, because, with other reasons, they take the narrow view of the objects for which they attend school, and are disposed to regard all the time and labor, that they spend there, as so much lost time and labor. It may be, that the scholar is just beginning to think for himself, to look for a reason for what he does ; and that his mind has just reached that state of maturity, to make the studies of more use to him, than at any previous period. Perhaps, too, the parents are desirous that he should continue longer at school, but are not able, if consulted, to tell him, to his satisfaction, the particular purpose of this or that study, which he pursues. And this very time, the most advantageous to him, if his mind be in the right state, is thus rendered worse than useless. It seems to be a good plan, not to keep too near the book ; to endeavor to make the pupils, if old enough, understand the reasons which the teacher has, for putting them into this or that study ; to show them what bearing, direct or indirect, it may have upon the real business of life, and of what service it is likely to be to them. It were far better, that the manner of conducting the recitation, the spirit that should pervade it, and the remarks made, from day to day, should make it one of the last questions which the scholars should be disposed to ask, in a doubting way, whether they got any good from the study and the recitation ? These things should make the usefulness of a study, or rather the usefulness of studying, diligently and carefully, the lessons,—for it is of much more consequence *how* the lessons are gotten, than *what* they are,—plain enough for the scholar himself to see it, so that he should bestow the labor requisite upon them, when alone, by himself, and submit, cheerfully, to any restraint which the studies and school duties might make necessary. That is, we say, while the recitations, conducted on the dull, strict plan, tend to render the scholars weary of their daily exercises, and do not enable them to discern, even when they seek to, of what use the studies are likely to be to them, recitations conducted on a more liberal plan, not only serve better to advance the scholars in knowledge, to keep them cheerful, but also to open to them the purposes for which they pursue their different studies, and for which they are sent to school.